

### Jonah 3.10 - 4.11 (NRSV)

3.10 When God saw what they did, how (the people of Nineveh) turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

4.1 But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. 2 He prayed to the Lord and said, 'O Lord! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. 3 And now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.' 4 And the Lord said, 'Is it right for you to be angry?' 5 Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

6 The Lord God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. 7 But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. 8 When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, 'It is better for me to die than to live.'

9 But God said to Jonah, 'Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?' And he said, 'Yes, angry enough to die.' 10 Then the Lord said, 'You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labour and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. 11 And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?'

### Jonah 3.10 - 4.11 (The Message)

3.10 God saw what (the people of Nineveh) had done, that they had turned away from their evil lives. He did change his mind about them. What he said he would do to them he didn't do.

4.1-2 Jonah was furious. He lost his temper. He yelled at God, "God! I knew it—when I was back home, I knew this was going to happen! That's why I ran off to Tarshish! I knew you were sheer grace and mercy, not easily angered, rich in love, and ready at the drop of a hat to turn your plans of punishment into a program of forgiveness!

3 "So, God, if you won't kill them, kill me! I'm better off dead!"

4 God said, "What do you have to be angry about?"

5 But Jonah just left. He went out of the city to the east and sat down in a sulk. He put together a makeshift shelter of leafy branches and sat there in the shade to see what would happen to the city.

6 God arranged for a broad-leafed tree to spring up. It grew over Jonah to cool him off and get him out of his angry sulk. Jonah was pleased and enjoyed the shade. Life was looking up.

7-8 But then God sent a worm. By dawn of the next day, the worm had bored into the shade tree and it withered away. The sun came up and God sent a hot, blistering wind from the east. The sun beat down on Jonah's head and he started to faint. He prayed to die: "I'm better off dead!"

9 Then God said to Jonah, "What right do you have to get angry about this shade tree?" Jonah said, "Plenty of right. It's made me angry enough to die!"

10-11 God said, "What's this? How is it that you can change your feelings from pleasure to anger overnight about a mere shade tree that you did nothing to get? You neither planted nor watered it. It grew up one night and died the next night. So, why can't I likewise change what I feel about Nineveh from anger to pleasure, this big city of more than 120,000 childlike people who don't yet know right from wrong, to say nothing of all the innocent animals?"

**Psalm 145 .1-8  
(NRSV)**

- 1 I will extol you, my God and King,  
and bless your name for ever and ever.
- 2 Every day I will bless you,  
and praise your name for ever and ever.
- 3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be  
praised;  
his greatness is unsearchable.
- 4 One generation shall laud your works to  
another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts.
- 5 On the glorious splendour of your  
majesty,  
and on your wondrous works, I will  
meditate.
- 6 The might of your awesome deeds shall  
be proclaimed,  
and I will declare your greatness.
- 7 They shall celebrate the fame of your  
abundant goodness,  
and shall sing aloud of your  
righteousness.
- 8 The Lord is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in  
steadfast love.

**Psalm 145 .1-8  
(The Message)**

- 1 I lift you high in praise, my God, O my  
King!  
and I'll bless your name into eternity.
- 2 I'll bless you every day,  
and keep it up from now to eternity.
- 3 God is magnificent; he can never be  
praised enough.  
There are no boundaries to his  
greatness.
- 4 Generation after generation stands in  
awe of your work;  
each one tells stories of your mighty  
acts.
- 5 Your beauty and splendor have everyone  
talking;  
I compose songs on your wonders.
- 6 Your marvellous doings are headline  
news;  
I could write a book full of the details of  
your greatness.
- 7 The fame of your goodness spreads  
across the country;  
your righteousness is on everyone's lips.
- 8 God is all mercy and grace—  
not quick to anger, is rich in love.

**Philippians 1 .21-30  
(NRSV)**

21 For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me; and I do not know which I prefer. 23 I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; 24 but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. 25 Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, 26 so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. 27 Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, 28 and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. 29 For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well— 30 since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

**Philippians 1 .21-30  
(The Message)**

21 Alive, I'm Christ's messenger; dead, I'm his bounty. Life versus even more life! I can't lose.

22-26 As long as I'm alive in this body, there is good work for me to do. If I had to choose right now, I hardly know which I'd choose. Hard choice! The desire to break camp here and be with Christ is powerful. Some days I can think of nothing better. But most days, because of what you are going through, I am sure that it's better for me to stick it out here. So I plan to be around awhile, companion to you as your growth and joy in this life of trusting God continues. You can start looking forward to a great reunion when I come visit you again. We'll be praising Christ, enjoying each other.

27-30 Meanwhile, live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ. Let nothing in your conduct hang on whether I come or not. Your conduct must be the same whether I show up to see things for myself or hear of it from a distance. Stand united, singular in vision, contending for people's trust in the Message, the good news, not flinching or dodging in the slightest before the opposition. Your courage and unity will show them what they're up against: defeat for them, victory for you—and both because of God. There's far more to this life than trusting in Christ. There's also suffering for him. And the suffering is as much a gift as the trusting. You're involved in the same kind of struggle you saw me go through, on which you are now getting an updated report in this letter.

## Matthew 20 .1-16 (NRSV)

1 'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. 2 After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. 3 When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; 4 and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. 5 When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. 6 And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" 7 They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." 8 When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." 9 When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. 10 Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. 11 And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, 12 saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." 13 But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? 14 Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. 15 Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" 16 So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

## Matthew 20 .1-16 (The Message)

1-2 "God's kingdom is like an estate manager who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. They agreed on a wage of a dollar a day, and went to work. 3-5 "Later, about nine o'clock, the manager saw some other men hanging around the town square unemployed. He told them to go to work in his vineyard and he would pay them a fair wage. They went. 5-6 "He did the same thing at noon, and again at three o'clock. At five o'clock he went back and found still others standing around. He said, 'Why are you standing around all day doing nothing?' 7 "They said, 'Because no one hired us.' "He told them to go to work in his vineyard. 8 "When the day's work was over, the owner of the vineyard instructed his foreman, 'Call the workers in and pay them their wages. Start with the last hired and go on to the first.' 9-12 "Those hired at five o'clock came up and were each given a dollar. When those who were hired first saw that, they assumed they would get far more. But they got the same, each of them one dollar. Taking the dollar, they groused angrily to the manager, 'These last workers put in only one easy hour, and you just made them equal to us, who slaved all day under a scorching sun.' 13-15 "He replied to the one speaking for the rest, 'Friend, I haven't been unfair. We agreed on the wage of a dollar, didn't we? So take it and go. I decided to give to the one who came last the same as you. Can't I do what I want with my own money? Are you going to get stingy because I am generous?' 16 "Here it is again, the Great Reversal: many of the first ending up last, and the last first."